

SAFETY MESSAGE



Working in Tall Grass, Compiled by USDA-APHIS-CCEP

Working in tall grass poses many different safety issues, there are the critters that hide in the grass, the holes hidden by the grass, and in this situation what you don't know can hurt you.

Weeds, tall grasses, and bushes provide a great outdoor refuge for mosquitos and ticks. The mosquito is most known for carrying St. Louis Encephalitis, West Nile Virus, Malaria, and Dengue. The tick is most known for carrying Lyme disease.

To avoid mosquitos, use insect repellent in high-risk areas, or when outside in high-risk times. The most effective protection can be obtained through the use of products containing between 20% and 35% DEET on areas of exposed skin and clothing. Use caution when applying to face, and avoid contact with eyes and mouth. Another way to steer clear of mosquitos is to wear protective clothing, this includes lightweight long sleeve shirts and long pants...just like what you should wear to protect your skin from the scorching Florida sun.

To avoid ticks, use the same precautions as if avoiding mosquitos. Try to stick to light colored clothing to make ticks easy to spot. Also check for ticks every few hours, and when you get home before your shower. Ticks are small and easy to miss so check carefully—you can use the buddy system to help...four eyes are better than two. If you do find a tick on your skin, remove it right away. To remove an attached tick, use tweezers to grasp the tick at the skin's surface. If tweezers are not available, use a tissue to protect fingers from possible exposure to the tick's body fluids. With a steady motion, gently pull the tick straight out. Do not crush the tick's body. Have patience; it may take time to remove the tick properly. Using petroleum jelly or touching the tick with a hot match may be common practices but are not the best procedures.

Stay alert to your surroundings. All types of critters—hogs, deer, alligators, wild cats, grove dogs, snakes and other larger animals—love the tall grass and low beds. While most of the time wild animals will go out of their way to avoid you, if threatened they can become hostile. Make your presence known when surveying, excessive noise and commotion should scare away any wildlife.

Pay attention to where you step. The tall grass will make it very hard to see obstacles and holes on your path. Use your walking sticks to feel the ground in front of you. Step only when you have identified a secure path.

You may opt to wear safety goggles/glasses to protect your eyes from foreign debris. Grass seed, small insects, pollen, and the grass itself can cause eye injury if your eyes are not protected.

Be Careful, Be Aware, and Be Safe.